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United Nations Forum on Forests

Programme budget implications of the recommendations contained in the report of the United Nations Forum on Forests on its seventh session

Statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 31 of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Forum on Forests, in its report on its seventh session,[1] in describing the action it had taken on the adoption of its resolution 7/1, entitled "Multi-year programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for the period 2007-2015",[2] noted that the Secretary had read out a statement prepared by the Programme Planning and Budget Division of the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts of the Secretariat on the draft resolution of the Forum for adoption by the Council.[3] In its statement, the Division noted that delays in finalizing consultations on the draft resolution had not provided the Secretariat with the requisite 48-hour minimum period required to prepare and present the statement of the financial implications of the draft resolution. The statement concluded with a commitment to carry out a thorough review of the implications of the draft resolution and to submit a written statement containing a detailed analysis of its programme budget implications to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2007. The results of the review are set out below.

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council 2007, Supplement No. 22* (E/2007/42 and Corr.1).
[2] Ibid., chap. I, sect. C.
[3] Ibid., chap. I, sect. A.

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II. Relevant requests contained in the draft resolution

2. Under the terms of paragraphs 1, 2 and 5 of the draft resolution recommended by the United Nations Forum on Forests for adoption by the Council,[3] the Council would, inter alia:

(a) Note that the United Nations Forum on Forests, at its seventh session, adopted a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests;

(b) Recommend to the General Assembly that it adopt the draft resolution, in which it would decide, inter alia, to adopt the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests;

(c) Decide that the Forum should, within existing resources, convene before its eighth session, an open-ended ad hoc expert group to develop proposals for the development of a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework and invite the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to assist in the development of those proposals.

3. During its seventh session the Forum, by its resolution 7/1, also adopted its multi-year programme of work for the period 2007-2015, which was also brought to the attention of the Council in the report.[2]

III. Relationship of the requests to the biennial programme plan and priorities for the period 2008-2009

4. The activities referred to in the draft resolution would fall under subprogramme 9, Sustainable forest management, of programme 7, Economic and social affairs, of the biennial programme plan and priorities for the period 2008-2009, as revised by the General Assembly.[4] However, since they also fall under subprogramme 9, Sustainable forest management, of section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009,[5] modifications to the programme of work and resource requirements, resulting from the requests contained in the draft resolution, will be considered by the General Assembly at its sixty-second session in the context of its consideration of section 9 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009.

IV. Activities by which the proposed requests would be carried out

5. Should the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and the multi-year programme of work of the Forum be approved by the General Assembly, the secretariat of the Forum would support its implementation through, inter alia:

(a) Preparing, in coordination with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, analytical consolidated reports that assess overall progress made on the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument and towards the achievement of the four global objectives on forests;

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[4] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No. 6* (A/61/6/Rev.1).

[5] A/62/6 (Sect. 9).

(b) Liaising, coordinating and following up on the establishment and management of the global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework and managing the substantive areas of the means of implementation;

(c) Managing the preparation of substantive documentation and the reporting of the meetings related to the Forum and the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument;

(d) Conceptualizing, planning and managing expert meetings and preparatory working meetings, panels and seminars.

6. In this connection, the secretariat would: (a) convene an expert group meeting on regional inputs to the global dialogue; (b) organize interactive panels and special events during Forum sessions; (c) undertake advisory missions for planning coordinated and harmonized inputs in the work of the Forum; (d) prepare subregional/regional, national or sectoral analyses that provide a basis for national Governments and regional organizations in their forest policy development; (e) monitor forest policy developments in the regions and identify recurrent and emerging issues of concern to the Forum; (f) draft policy recommendations; and (g) design and monitor technical cooperation projects.

7. In preparation for an open-ended ad hoc expert group meeting to develop proposals for the elaboration of a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework, which is to be held in 2008, a review of current financial mechanisms and an assessment of the viability for adoption as a global mechanism would be undertaken.

8. The adoption and implementation of the multi-year programme of work of the Forum for 2007-2015 would also give rise to a number of new activities. For the Forum's eighth session in 2009, under the overall themes of "Forests in a changing environment" and "Means of implementation for sustainable forest management", the secretariat of the Forum would prepare thematic documents and would convene expert group meetings on: (a) forests and climate change, (b) reversing the loss of forest cover, preventing forest degradation in all types of forests and combating desertification, and (c) forests and biodiversity conservation, including protected areas.

9. In adopting the multi-year programme of work, the Forum laid out the monitoring, assessment and reporting requirements on the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests. In that connection, the secretariat of the Forum would undertake: (a) the assessment and synthesis of national reports and the proposal of recommendations to the Forum on the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument; (b) the creation and maintenance of databases of country information and national reports submitted to the Forum; and (c) the drafting of specified inputs for technical papers and analytical studies on selected global, regional, national or sectoral aspects of sustainable forest management.

V. Modifications required in the programme of work and the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009

10. In order to take into account the provisions of the draft resolution, the programme narrative and outputs of section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the

proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009[5] would be modified and would be incorporated into the programme of work of section 9, subject to the approval by the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. The required modifications to the outputs would be as follows:

Table 9.25

Expected accomplishment (a): the words "adoption and" would be deleted and the words "on all types of forests" would be added after the words "non-legally binding instrument";

Indicator of achievement (a): the words "and collaborative actions on the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and" would be inserted between the words "decisions" and "on improvement";

Expected accomplishment (b): the words "on progress" would be inserted between the words "actions" and "towards";

Expected accomplishment (c): the words "on sustainable forest management" would be inserted between the words "management" and "among".

Paragraph 9.78

(a) (i) a. Substantive servicing of meetings: the words "intersessional meetings (80)" would be replaced with the words "intersessional meetings (56)";

(a) (i) b. Parliamentary documentation: the following text, "report on regional input (1); report on forests and climate change (1); report on reversing the loss of forest cover, preventing forest degradation in all types of forests and combating desertification, including in low forest cover countries (1); report on forests and biodiversity conservation (1); report on emerging issues (1); Chairman's summary of the open-ended ad hoc expert group on a global financial mechanism (1); note on progress towards sustainable forest management (1); note on the progress in implementing the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (1); note on the progress towards achieving the four global objectives on forests (1); note on the Trust Fund in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests (1); note on the activities of the Economic and Social Council relevant to the work of the Forum (1); and provisional agenda and note on the ad hoc expert group on a global financial mechanism (2), would be added;

(a) (iii) Ad hoc expert groups: the words "seven expert group meetings on:" would be deleted and the words with "10 expert group meetings on:" would be inserted; the words "reclustering and subject indexing of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/ Intergovernmental Forum on Forests Proposal for Action" and "annexes of a non-legally binding instrument for the seven thematic elements of sustainable forest management" would be deleted; the number of meetings for the "multi-stakeholder dialogue on sustainable forest management: civil society perspectives in

conjunction with the intersessional and the eighth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests" would be changed from (2) to (1), and the words "open-ended meeting on a global financial mechanism", "forests and climate change", "forests and biodiversity conservation", "reversing the loss of forest cover", "funding mechanisms" and "regional inputs" would be added;

(b) (iii) Booklets, fact sheets, wallcharts, information kits: the words "information kit on the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (1); booklet on review of the current financial mechanisms (1)" would be added;

(b) (v) Special events: the words "interactive panels with stakeholders, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and regional organizations (3)" would be added;

(b) (vi) Technical material: the words "guidelines and reporting format on the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument (6); guidelines for providing regional inputs (3); guidelines for the review of existing current financial mechanisms (3); guidelines for providing information on events and initiatives relevant to the preparations for the International Year of Forests (3)" would be added;

(b) (viii) Substantive servicing of inter-agency meetings: the words "Collaborative Partnership on Forests initiative to review the current international financing mechanisms (2)" would be added;

(c) (i) Advisory services: the words "provision of expert advice to Member States and regional organizations on the non-legally binding instrument (support to country-led initiatives) (3)" would be added.

VI. Estimated resource requirements

A. Conference-servicing requirements

11. The conference-servicing requirements, at full cost, for the open-ended ad hoc working group on the development of a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework to be convened in 2008 in New York are estimated at $331,900. It is also estimated that there would be one week of meetings in December 2008, with two meetings per day, for a total of 10 meetings. Interpretation would be provided in all six official languages and documentation to be processed in the six official languages is estimated at 68 pages (pre-session) and 40 pages (post-session). As regards the venue of the meeting, in accordance with the Headquarters principle embodied in General Assembly resolution 40/243, the meetings of the United Nations Forum on Forests should be held in New York. Furthermore, the dates of these meetings are subject to the availability of conference-servicing facilities and resources and would be determined in consultation with the Secretariat.

B. Non-conference-servicing requirements: section 9, Economic and social affairs

12. Should the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and the multi-year programme of work of the Forum be approved by the General Assembly, the new and expanded functions resulting from such adoption would require the strengthening of the secretariat of the Forum. These functions include the facilitation, implementation, monitoring and reporting on the non-legally binding instrument and the monitoring of and follow-up to the achievement of the global objectives on forests and other internationally agreed goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. It is estimated, on the full cost basis, that five new posts (1 D-1, 1 P-4, 2 P-3 and 1 General Service (Other level)) and non-post resources, amounting to $1,705,200, would be required, as follows:

1. Post requirements ($809,900)

(a) Principal Forest Affairs Officer (D-1): responsible for the implementation and coordination of activities related to the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, including liaison with governing bodies of other relevant environmental conventions, instruments and organizations and for the preparation of the summary and analytical reports called for by the multi-year programme of work; coordinating and following up on the establishment and management of the Global Forest Fund; managing the preparation of substantive documentation for and the reporting of the meetings related to the international instrument on all types of forests; and planning and managing expert group meetings, panels and seminars;

(b) Forest Affairs Officer (P-4): responsible for managing and coordinating subregional and regional inputs as an integral and essential component of the regular sessions of the Forum; preparation of subregional/regional, national or sectoral analysis that provides a basis for advising national Governments and regional organizations on forest policy development issues; monitoring forest policy developments in the regions and identifying recurrent and emerging issues of concern to the Forum; drafting policy recommendations; and formulating proposals for development strategies, policies and measures for presentation to the intergovernmental bodies;

(c) Forest Affairs Officer (P-3): responsible for assessing and synthesizing national reports and propose recommendations to the Forum on implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests; developing and maintaining databases of country information and national reports submitted to the Forum; monitoring and assessing the implementation of cooperation programmes and projects based on the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests; drafting specified inputs for technical papers and analytical studies on selected global, regional, national or sectoral aspects of sustainable forest management; and assisting in the organization and servicing of expert group meetings, seminars and panels on forest policy issues;

(d) Forest Affairs Officer (P-3): responsible for provision of substantive support to the multi-stakeholder dialogue; development and coordination of the Forum's major group focal point system; planning and organizing consultation meetings between the secretariat of the Forum and the multi-stakeholder dialogue, undertaking policy-oriented research, analysing trends and developments affecting the multi-stakeholder dialogue, assisting in the development of organization-led initiatives that serve as substantive input to the sessions, and other partnerships and activities that contribute to the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument and the global objectives on forests; preparing analytical reports and papers for the sessions of the Forum; and coordinating with regional processes and organizations;

(e) General Service (Other level): responsible for providing research, administrative and clerical support to the activities related to the non-legally binding instrument and the global objectives on forests, including assistance in the maintenance of the databases of country information and national reports submitted to the Forum.

2. Non-post requirements ($895,300)

(a) Consultants ($80,000). A provision of $80,000, covering 16 consultancy work-months, is required to secure specialized expertise not available in the Secretariat to cover reports and studies on the following topics: (i) proposals for the development of a voluntary global financial mechanism, a portfolio approach and a forest financing framework; (ii) forests and climate change; (iii) reversing the loss of forest cover, preventing forest degradation in all types of forests and combating desertification; and (d) forests and biodiversity conservation;

(b) Expert group meetings ($613,800)

(i) Provision of $332,800 is required to convene in 2008, prior to the eighth session of the Forum, an open-ended ad hoc expert group meeting to prepare proposals for the development of a voluntary global financial mechanism, a portfolio approach and a forest financing framework. It is estimated that the meeting would be convened in New York for five days with participation of 75 governmental experts, in particular experts from developing and least developed countries;

(ii) Provision of $281,000 is required for five expert group meetings on: funding mechanisms; forests and climate change; forests and biodiversity conservation; reversing the loss of forest cover; and regional inputs. It is estimated that each meeting would be convened in New York for two days each with participation of 15 experts per meeting;

(c) Travel of staff ($60,000): provision of $60,000 is required for six missions per year to support engagement of the various regional and subregional processes in the effort to engage multi-stakeholders

and relevant forest-related international, regional, subregional bodies, mechanisms and processes in exploring joint activities towards the achievement of sustainable forest management, the global objectives on forests and the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests;

(d) General operating expenses ($19,000): provision of $19,000 is required to cover costs of communications ($10,000) and maintenance of office automation equipment, including local area network (LAN) support services ($9,000);

(e) Supplies and materials ($2,500): provision of $2,500 is required for supplies and materials, including paper, stationery, electronic data and word processing supplies;

(f) Furniture and equipment ($10,000): provision of $10,000 is required for acquisition of office automation equipment, including personal computers and printers for the proposed five new posts.

C. Section 28 D, Office of Central Support Services

13. The additional amount of $231,500 is needed under section 28 D, Office of Central Support Services of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009, as follows:

(a) Rental and maintenance of premises ($219,000): an additional amount of $219,000 is required to provide for the recurrent costs of rental of office space for five new posts ($110,000) and for the one-time costs for related minor alteration/improvements to rented premises ($109,000). As the Headquarters facilities, including leased facilities, are at maximum capacity, it is no longer possible to accommodate the additional personnel requirements emanating from the new mandates without leasing additional property/office space;

(b) Common support costs ($12,500): an additional amount of $12,500 is required to provide for contractual services of sound technicians to service the meetings of the open-ended ad hoc expert group.

D. Section 35, Staff assessment

14. The amount of $126,500 is needed to provide for staff assessment for the five new posts under section 32, Staff assessment, to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment.

15. The total additional requirements for the implementation of the above activities are estimated at $2,285,100. After deduction of the amounts to be reprogrammed or absorbed, as explained in paragraphs 16 to 24 below, the additional requirements are estimated at $1,450,700 as follows:

	Total additional requirements	*To be reprogrammed*	*Net additional requirements*
Section 2			
Conference-servicing requirements	331 900	331 900	—
Section 9			
Posts	809 900	—	809 900
Consultants	80 000	80 000	
Expert group meetings	613 800	350 000	263 800
Travel of staff	60 000	60 000	—
General operating expenses	19 000	—	19 000
Supplies and materials	2 500	—	2 500
Furniture and equipment	10 000	—	10 000
Subtotal, section 9	**1 595 200**	**490 000**	**1 105 200**
Section 28 D	231 500	12 500	219 000
Section 35	126 500	—	126 500
Grand total	**2 285 100**	**834 400**	**1 450 700**

VII. Potential for absorption during the biennium 2008-2009

16. With regard to conference-servicing costs for the meetings of the open-ended ad hoc expert group on the development of a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework, it is estimated that conference services would be provided for those meetings on an "as available" basis, which means that provision has been made under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009[6] for the conference-servicing of meetings scheduled to take place within specific time periods. If the meetings authorized subsequently could be accommodated within these periods, the related conference-servicing requirements would be also met under the existing provision. Consequently, the additional amount of $331,900 required for conference servicing of the meetings of the open-ended ad hoc working group would be met within resources under section 2 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009. Similarly, the additional amount of $12,500 to provide for contractual services of sound technicians would be accommodated under section 28 D, Office of Central Support Services, of the proposed programme budget.

17. In its resolution 2000/35, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to establish a compact secretariat, strengthened through staff from secretariats of international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, to service the Forum and to support the collaborative partnership on forests. Consequently, the General Assembly, in part IV of its resolution 56/255, approved the provision of four Professional level and two General Service (Other

[6] A/62/6 (Sect. 2).

level) posts, which have been maintained since then under section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the programme budget.

18. During the first seven years, of the Forum's existence, regular budget-funded staff of the secretariat of the Forum were supplemented by three temporary posts at the Professional level funded from the Trust Fund in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests. The responsibilities of the extrabudgetary posts were focused on coordination and substantive support to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the management of intersessional work, including country and organization-led initiatives, and the provision of support and policy advice to Governments and organizations, upon request. It is expected that funding arrangements for these posts would continue in the biennium 2008-2009. Since its establishment, the secretariat has also been supported by senior staff members seconded from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Tropical Timber Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme. However, the work demands on these organizations have exerted pressure on their staffing complements and, as of 1 August 2007, no staff from these other organizations will be available for secondment to the Forum secretariat. No further commitments have been received to date. Therefore, the arrangement envisioned by the Council at the establishment of the Forum would not appear to be sustainable over a long period.

19. No provision has been made in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 for staff resources required for the additional outputs under the Forum's multi-year programme of work, or for the activities related to the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests. The additional staff requirements in this regard cannot be absorbed within the current level of staffing of the Forum's secretariat nor met within the resources available under section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009.

20. No provision has been made in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 to cover the costs of the open-ended ad hoc group on the development of a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework, which amount to $332,800. However, section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 includes a provision of $137,900 for travel of the Forum's members to annual sessions. Since the Forum would meet biennially, starting with its eighth session in 2009, the amount of $69,000 would be reprogrammed to offset a portion of the costs for the meetings of the open-ended ad hoc working group. Therefore, only a one-time provision of $263,800 would be required under the regular budget.

21. No provision has been made in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 to cover the five ad hoc expert group meetings totalling $281,000. However, three programmed meetings, reclustering and subject indexing of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action ($41,000), the annexes of a non-legally binding instrument for the thematic elements of sustainable forest management ($41,000), and one of two multi-stakeholder dialogues on sustainable forest management ($35,600), will not be undertaken. The related total amount of $117,600 would be reprogrammed to cover the cost of two meetings on climate change and reversing the loss of forest cover. The costs of the expert meetings on biodiversity conservation, regional inputs and the funding mechanism would be met from extrabudgetary resources.

22. The requirements of $80,000 under consultants would be covered in part from provisions in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 for specialized expertise to assist in the preparation of studies and reports that will not be undertaken, namely the reclustering and subject indexing of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action ($20,000) and the annexes of a non-legally binding instrument for the seven thematic elements of sustainable forest management ($16,000). These resources would be reprogrammed to cover the cost for consultancies for climate change and reversing loss of forest cover. The consultancy requirements for the biodiversity conservation and funding mechanism would be financed from extrabudgetary resources.

23. The requirements of $60,000 under staff travel to support the engagement of various regional and subregional processes to explore joint activities towards the achievement of sustainable forest management, the global objectives of forests and the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument would be financed from extrabudgetary resources.

24. Consequently, should the Economic and Social Council adopt the draft resolution, an additional appropriation of $1,450,700 would be required over and above the resources available under of section 9, Economic and social affairs, section 28 D, Office of Central Support Services, and section 35, Staff assessment, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009.

VIII. Contingency fund

25. It will be recalled that, under the procedures adopted by the General Assembly in its resolutions 41/213 and 42/211, a contingency fund is established for each biennium to accommodate additional expenditures derived from legislative mandates not provided for in the programme budget. Under this procedure, if additional expenditures were proposed that exceed the resources available from the contingency fund, the activities concerned would be implemented only through the redeployment of resources from low-priority areas or the modification of existing activities. Otherwise, such additional activities would have to be deferred to a later biennium.

IX. Conclusion

26. **The adoption by the Economic and Social Council of the draft resolution contained in the report of the seventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests would give rise to additional requirements of $1,450,700, including $1,105,200 under section 9, Economic and social affairs, $219,000 under section 28 D, Office of Central Support Services, and $126,500 under section 35, Staff assessment, to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009.**

27. **Consequently, an additional provision of $1,450,700 would be required over and above the resources of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009. That provision would represent a charge against the**

contingency fund and, as such, would require appropriations for the biennium 2008-2009 to be approved by the General Assembly at its sixty-second session.

28. **The General Assembly is also requested to approve the proposed modifications to the programme narrative and outputs to be incorporated into the programme of work of section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009.**